

Sūrah An-Nās (The Mankind)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 6 verses

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَهِ النَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾ مِنْ شَرِّ
الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ﴿٥﴾
مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

Say, "I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, [1] the King of mankind, [2] the God of mankind, [3] from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws (when Allah's name is pronounced), [4] the one who whispers in the hearts of people, [5] whether from among the Jinn or Mankind. [6]

Introductory Remarks

This Sūrah, the second of the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, constitutes an extension of its predecessor and is in a way complementary to it, in that in Sūrah Al-Falaq the believers were enjoined to seek refuge with Allah against the hardships and privations of life in this world, while in the current Sūrah protection is sought from the trials and tribulations of the Hereafter. It was explained in Sūrah Al-Falaq that the word *sharr* could stand for 'evil' or 'harm' or even 'that which causes harm, anguish or distress'. In the present Sūrah, we are to seek refuge from the evil that is the cause of all sins, namely, the whisperings and insinuations of Satan. As the anguish and distress of the Hereafter is most severe, the Qur'ān

appropriately emphasizes at the end to seek Allah's protection against these evil powers.

Verse [114:1] قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ Say, (I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind,) The attributive name of Allah *rabb* stands for 'one who nurtures', and implies that the Supreme Nurturer takes care of everything under all circumstances. In the present verse, He is referred to as 'the Lord of mankind', while in the previous Sūrah He was referred to as 'the Lord of the daybreak', because in the foregoing Sūrah the purpose was to seek protection against the outer bodily hardships and privations of life, and they are not confined to human beings. Animals also suffer bodily hardships and difficulties, unlike the Satanic instigations which are restricted to man, and the Jinn are subjoined to him. [Maḏharī from Baiḏāwī]

Verses [114:2 & 3] مَلِكِ النَّاسِ. إِلَهِ النَّاسِ (the King of mankind, the God of mankind.) The reason for adding these two attributes is that the word *rabb*, attributed to a particular thing, could refer to someone other than Allah also, as for instance رَبُّ الدَّارِ *rabb-ud-dār* [land-lord] or رَبُّ الْمَالِ *rabb-ul-māl* [owner of wealth]. But not every master or owner is a king. That is why the attributive name *malik* [King] has been added to indicate that He is not only the 'Lord of mankind' but also the 'King of mankind'. Furthermore, not every king is worthy of worship. Thus the third attributive name *ilāh* [God] has been added to *nās* [people]. The Divine wisdom in combining all three Divine attributes is that each attribute motivates protection. Every master has servants and takes care of them. Likewise, every king has subjects and looks after them. That the worshipped God protects His worshipper is even more obvious. Only Allah, and no other being, is characterized by these three attributes simultaneously. Therefore, seeking Allah's protection by invoking these attributes is the greatest protection, and the invocation is readily acceptable.

Since the first sentence contains the word *nās* (people), the second and the third verses should apparently refer to them with the pronouns by saying, مَلِكِهِمْ *malikihim* [their king] rather than repeating the word *nās* (people). However, this is an occasion of supplication and praise, and as such repetition needs to be employed by deliberate design to add force and clarity to the sublime emotion by creating natural rhyme, rhythm and

melodic sequence. Some scholars have explained the repetition of the word 'nās' differently. They say that the word *nās* occurs five times in this Sūrah. In its first occurrence, it refers to the children. The word *rabb* that refers to nurturer-ship of Allah is a hint to this, because children need nurturing the most. Its second occurrence refers to youth, and the hint in the context is the word *malik* which refers to kingship of Allah. It bears political connotation and is appropriate to the youth. Its third occurrence refers to old age. Old people cut themselves off from the world and look up to Allah alone as the real support of life, and render Him alone true and unconditional obedience and to make Him alone the real object of his love and adoration. The context for this is *ilāh* [God] which points to the Divine worship. Its fourth occurrence refers to the righteous servants of Allah. The contextual hint for this is the word *waswasah* [evil whisperings] because the devil is the enemy of the righteous servants of Allah. His work is to cast evil prompting into the hearts of such people. Its fifth occurrence refers to mischief-makers because protection is sought from their mischief.

Verse [114:4] مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ (from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws [when Allah's name is pronounced].) After invoking three attributes of Allah, the present verse describes the one from whom protection is sought. He is 'the whisperer who withdraws'. The word *waswās* is originally an infinitive in the sense of *waswasah* 'to whisper [that is, to use breath instead of voice, when saying something in barely audible way]'. But here it is used as an hyperbolic expression to refer to 'Satan' in the sense that 'he is an embodiment of whisper'. Whispering of the Satan means that he invites people to his obedience by a superstitious discourse in a way that its subject is cast into man's heart, but no voice is heard. [Qurṭubī].

The word خَنَّاسُ *khannās* is derived from *khanasa* which means 'to sneak, recede or withdraw furtively'. The Satan is so named because he puts himself in a squatting [perched] position on the heart of man. So, when the latter becomes heedless, the former whispers, but when he remembers Allah, he withdraws furtively. When man becomes unmindful of Allah again, the Satan returns. Whenever man remembers Allah, he withdraws. This practice continues persistently. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

"Allah has built two houses in the heart of man, in one of which an angel resides and in the other the Satan. The angel urges him to do good works and the Satan induces him to do evil works. When man remembers Allah, the Satan withdraws. And when he stops remembering Allah, the Satan perches on the heart of man and pecks with his beak to whisper into it to do evil things." [Transmitted by Abū Ya'lā on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه, as quoted by Maḏharī].

Verse [114:6] مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ (whether from among the Jinn or Mankind.) This is explicative of the expression *waswās* occurring in verse [4], meaning that the devils from amongst mankind and the Jinn whisper into the breasts of mankind. Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has been enjoined to constantly seek protection against the mischief of sneaking devils, whether from amongst the Jinn or from amongst human devils.

A question may arise here. It is obvious that the Satans can cast a voiceless evil prompting furtively into the hearts of people, but how the human devils can cast evil whisperings? They come forward publicly and use their voice, which is not *waswasah* [whisper]. The answer is that human beings too often cast doubts in the minds of people in an indirect way without uttering them explicitly. Shaikh 'Izzuddīn Ibn 'Abdus-Salām states, in his monograph 'al-Fawā'id fī Mushkilāt-il-Qur'ān', that the 'whisperer from mankind' refers to the whispering of one's own *nafs* (base faculties of the man himself). Just as the Satan casts evil thoughts into man's mind, likewise the base self of man urges him to do evil works. That is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has directed us to seek protection in Allah from the evil of our own self in the following supplication:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ نَفْسِيْ وَشَرِّ الشَّيْطَانِ وَشَرِّكُمْ

"O Allah! I seek asylum in You from the evil of myself, from the evil of the Satan and from the evil of idolatry."

The Importance of Seeking Protection against Satanic Whisperings

Ibn Kathīr states that Allah invokes three of His attributive names in this Sūrah, *rabb* [Lord], *malik* [King] and *ilāh* [God], and instructs man to seek refuge with Him against diabolical whisperings, because a Satanic companion is attached to every man, and at every step of the way, the latter's attempt is to destroy the former in different ways. First of all, he induces him to commit sins, and paves the way for him to willfully violate

the Divine laws and injunctions. If he does not succeed in this, he tries to contaminate and destroy his acts of obedience and worship by casting the thoughts of dissimulation, hypocrisy, pride and arrogance. He attempts to create doubts about authentic beliefs and doctrines of Islam in the minds of the learned scholars. The only one who can be saved from the evil of such Satanic pranks is the one whom Allah gives His protection.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "There is not a single one of you, but his companion [a devil] has been assigned to him." The Companions enquired: 'Is such a devil companion joined to you also, O Messenger of Allah,?' He replied: 'Yes. However, Allah has helped me against him and he has become submissive to me. As a result, he only commands me to do good.'

It is also confirmed in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه, who reported the story of Sayyidah Ṣaḥīyah رضى الله عنها. Once while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was performing *I'tikaf* in the mosque, one of his wives Sayyidah Ṣaḥīyah رضى الله عنها paid him a visit. When she decided to leave, he gave her company to the boundaries of the mosque. On the way, two men of the Anṣār saw them together, The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Wait! This is Ṣaḥīyah bint Ḥuyayy [my wife]!" The two Companions exclaimed: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ "Pure is Allah, O Messenger of Allah, [how can we have ill thoughts about you?]" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Indeed, the devil runs through man's veins like the blood circulates. I feared that he might whisper evil thoughts in your minds. [That is why I had to call you and clarify that the lady with me was no other than my own wife.]"

Special Note

Just as it is necessary for man to avoid evil deeds, it is essential for Muslims to avoid occasions that may cause others to have ill thoughts about them. Should there arise an occasion which may give rise to such bad thoughts, they should immediately clarify the situation, and put an end to it then and there. In sum: This Tradition indicates that Satanic pranks are highly dangerous. It is not easy to avoid them unless we seek refuge with Allah.

A Clarification

There are two types of evil thoughts: [1] voluntary; and [2] involuntary. Here we are warned against voluntary thoughts that

proceed from the will or from one's own free choice. The involuntary thoughts are thoughts that occur without one's will or free choice. Such thoughts come to mind involuntarily and pass away. They are not harmful, nor are they sinful as long as they do not act upon them or speak about them .

A subtle difference between the two Sūrahs of *Mu'awwadhatain*

In the present Sūrah, *rabb* [Lord], *malik* [King] and *ilāh* [God], three Divine attributes have been invoked, while the evil from which protection is sought is only one, that is, the whispering. Conversely, in the previous Sūrah, only one attribute of Allah is mentioned, that is, *rabb-il-falaq* [Lord of the daybreak], but the evils from which protection is sought are many which are mentioned in three verses. This goes to show that the mischief of the Satan is the worst type of evil. The hardships and calamities that befall man in this world, affect his body and mundane affairs, unlike the Satanic pranks which affect man's mundane affairs as well his affairs of the Hereafter. The Satan is always after destroying man's after-life, and that is the most dangerous situation. If man suffers from physical injury or harm, he can find cure or remedy for it; but because the Satan lurks or lies hidden in ambush in every nook and corner of man's life to assault him unnoticed and pull him downwards, away from the Divine, it is not possible to resist him except with the protection granted by Allah. (Therefore, protection from him is sought by invoking three attributes of Allah.)

Human and Satanic Enemies: their differential treatments

One may have some enemies from mankind, and some from Satanic origin. The Holy Qur'ān has directed us to deal with these two kinds of enemies in different ways.

Ibn Kathīr in the preface of his commentary of the Holy Qur'ān has cited three verses of the Holy Qur'ān pertaining to this subject. All three of them have two parts. In the first part, Allah has instructed man to treat his human enemy with kindness, politeness, patience, mercy and compassion. If he does not desist from his evil ways, then *jihād* is prescribed in other verses. We need to wage armed struggle against the devilish elements of human society. But the only way to resist the Satanic enemy is to seek refuge with Allah. The first verse to this effect is in Sūrah Al-A'rāf [7:199]:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

(Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant.)

This pertains to defense against human enemy: In other words we need to grant courteous allowance for his offence, bid him to do good and forego revenge against injustice he might have committed. We must be easy in dealing with him and avoid causing him difficulty. This injunction is defence against human enemy and must be carried out in the first instance. But the next verse [7:200] of the same Sūrah pertains to the Satanic enemy as follows:

وَأَمَّا يَنْزِعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely He is All-hearing, All-knowing."

In other words, if an evil suggestion comes to us from the Satanic enemy, then we need to seek refuge in Allah.

The second verse is in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn [23:96-98]:

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ

"Repel evil with that which is best.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ

And say: 'O my Lord, I seek Your refuge from the from the strokes of the satans, and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me'.

In the first sentence of these verses, the direction is given to repel the evil caused by human beings with good behavior. But, when it comes to repel the evil caused by Satan, the direction given is to seek refuge in Allah.

The third verse dealing with the same subject is :[41:34]

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Repel (evi) with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend." [34]"

This part of the verse directs how to repel the evil caused by human enemy. If we repel evil deed with a better deed, it would be possible for us

to win over our human enemies and they would become our most devoted friends. As opposed to a human enemy, the other part of the situation is contained in the next verse [36]. It deals with the slinking devil who is invisible, but effective in his attack. The verse reads:

وَأَمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"And should a stroke from Shaitan (Satan) strikes you, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [41:36]

The wordings of this verse are more or less the same as they occur in Sūrah Al-A'rāf. In other words, if an evil suggestion comes to us from the Satan, we are required to seek refuge in Allah, because that is the only defensive weapon against the invisible slinking, sly and cunning enemy. [Ibn Kathīr]

In sum, all three sets of verses discussed above enjoin that a human enemy needs to be treated at first kindly, politely, patiently and compassionately, because human nature was in the primordial state created uncorrupted, and as such kindness, politeness, mercy and pardon could subdue him. However, human beings who have lost their primordial state of innocence, and are deeply sunk in the ocean of ignorance, the passions and the vices of the lower self or base self drag man downwards away from Allah. Some have become infidels, unbelievers and tyrants. They have thus become frontal enemies and come out armed with weapons of war to wage a frontal combat against the believers. The Qur'ān prescribes in other verses that such human enemies should be repelled by force of arms. Unlike the accursed Satan, he is evil in his primal nature, and as such kindness, compassion and pardon does not bring a good effect on him. It is also impossible to have an armed conflict with him. So, the only defence against such an enemy is the celestial weapon of *dhikrullah* [Allah's Remembrance] and *ta'awwudh* [seeking refuge with Allah], with which the entire Qur'ān is replete and the Qur'ān appropriately ends with it.

Moreover, while dealing with a human enemy, a believer is never a loser. If he overcomes the enemy and prevails upon him, his victory is obvious. If the enemy overcomes him or even kills him, then too he will attain high rewards, and a high degree of martyrdom in the Hereafter

which is far better than any worldly attainments. In other words, if a believer is defeated by a human enemy he has not lost anything nor is he harmed in anyway. But the case of the Satanic enemy is totally different. It is sinful to flatter him or please him; and if someone is defeated by him, it is to destroy his entire future in the Hereafter. This is the reason why the best defensive weapon against him is to seek refuge in Allah. This celestial weapon is so powerful and potent that all Satanic guile and treacherous cunning or craft are rendered weak and ineffective.

The Guile of Satan is Feeble

On account of the reasons given above, it may not be misunderstood that fighting the Satan is difficult. To dispel this misunderstanding, Allah has said:

إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا

"...No doubt, the guile of the Satan is feeble." (4:76)

It is further clarified in Sūrah An-Nahl:

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٩٨﴾ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

"So, when you recite the Qur'an, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the accursed. He is such that he has no power over those who believe in Allah and place trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate partners with Him. [16:98-100]"

Please see Ma'ariful Qur'an, Vol. 5/pp 412-415 for concise commentary and fuller details of related rulings.

Relationship between the Prologue and the Epilogue of the Qur'an

Allah prefaced the Qur'an with Sūrah Al-Fāṭihah which began with His Personal name. It further described His predominant attributes as being *Rabb* or Maintainer of the universe; as being the All-Merciful and Very Merciful and the Sole Judge of rights and wrongs. It defined religion as being His worship alone and imploring Him alone for help - all else being powerless in comparison. It further taught man to pray for true

guidance so that he is able to find the right path, and be established in it. He is taught to pray to be saved from being among those who are condemned and those who have lost the right path after having received it. These factors serve the purpose of man's success and prosperity in this world and in the next world, that is the Hereafter. However, in the process of achieving this purpose man is obstructed by the accursed Satan. He lays various traps inconspicuously utilizing people's different weak points, their sensual and unhealthy desires which he detects and exploits. The Satanic traps or snares need to be shattered or broken to pieces. Seeking refuge in Allah is the only effective protection against these evil powers. That is why the Qur'ān most fittingly ends on this.

Conclusion

All Thanks are due to Allah that the *tafsīr* of the noble Qur'ān has ended with the grace of Allah, and His kindness and help. Praise be to Allah from the beginning to the end, outwardly and inwardly non-manifestly and manifestly. We would not have found the way, had Allah not guided us. May Allah shower His blessings upon the best of creation, Muḥammad ﷺ, His chosen Messenger, the Seal and the leader of the Prophets and Messengers عليهم السلام. Upon him and the other Messengers be His blessings and peace, upon his family and his Companions, all of them. O 'Our Lord, accept from us! Indeed, You - and You alone - are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing! This work completed on Saturday morning 21st of Sha'bān 1392 AH. Co-incidentally, this is the day I was born. I completed 77th year of my life and turned 78 years old. I pray to Allah and hope that the last days of my life would be the best part of my life, doing the best deeds; and that the best days of my life would be the day when I meet my Lord with the blessing of His clear Book and His trustworthy Prophet ﷺ; and that the efforts of this humble servant would be accepted, whose soul was exhausted by ailments, grief, distress and anxieties, and lack of strength; and that He would pardon my errors and shortcomings if the obligations toward His noble Book were not fulfilled; and that the Muslims would benefit by it for aeons of time; and that He makes this work a treasure-trove for the Day when there will be no trading and no friendship, when neither wealth nor family will be of any help. My ability and help to do things come from Him. Pure is Allah; praise be to Him; Pure is Allah, the Great!

The 8th volume of Tafsīr of Ma‘āriful Qur‘ān was revised between 3rd of Ramaḍān 1392 AH and Friday 10th of Shawwāl 1392 AH, taking about forty days. Praise be to Allah!

Alḥamdulillah, the revision of the English version is completed on the night of 29 Ramadan 1424 A.H. corresponding to 25 November, 2003. May Allah bless this humble effort with His approval and pleasure, and make it beneficial for the readers. ‘Āmīn

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

Ṣadaqallāh-ul-‘Āzim

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّنَّ، مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Wa ṣallallāhu ‘ala nabiyyinā Muḥammadin wa ‘alā ‘Ālihī wa ṣahbihi wa sallam.

Alḥamdulillāhilladhī-ladhi Ibnī’matihī tatimmuṣṣālihāt

The translation of the text of the Holy Qur‘ān completed on 16 Rabī‘ul-Awwal 1424 A.H. corresponding to 19 May 2003 at Karachi on 11:25 forenoon

Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī, May Allah forgive him, and accept this humble effort in the service of the Holy Qur‘ān, His eternal book of guidance. May Allah give us tawfiq to recite it, understand

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Nās
Ends here